

# WDFW Youth Advisory Council



# Youth Council premises



Screen image, Poltergeist, 1982

- Department's future depends on healthy, self-reliant active, informed outdoorsmen and women.
- Too many youth are inside, inactive, screen-bound and hold negative attitudes about outdoor recreation
- We need the advice of youth to learn how to motivate youth



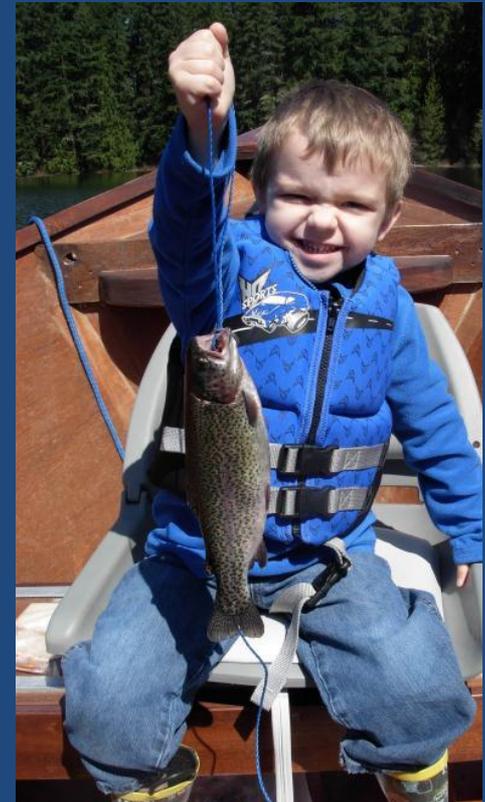
# Objectives

- Insights:
  - Gain specific advice on drawing youth into fishing, hunting, conservation, citizen science or recreational activities
- Engagement:
  - Design effective programs incorporating advice
- Communication:
  - Build social networks among and with youth to promote outdoor engagement



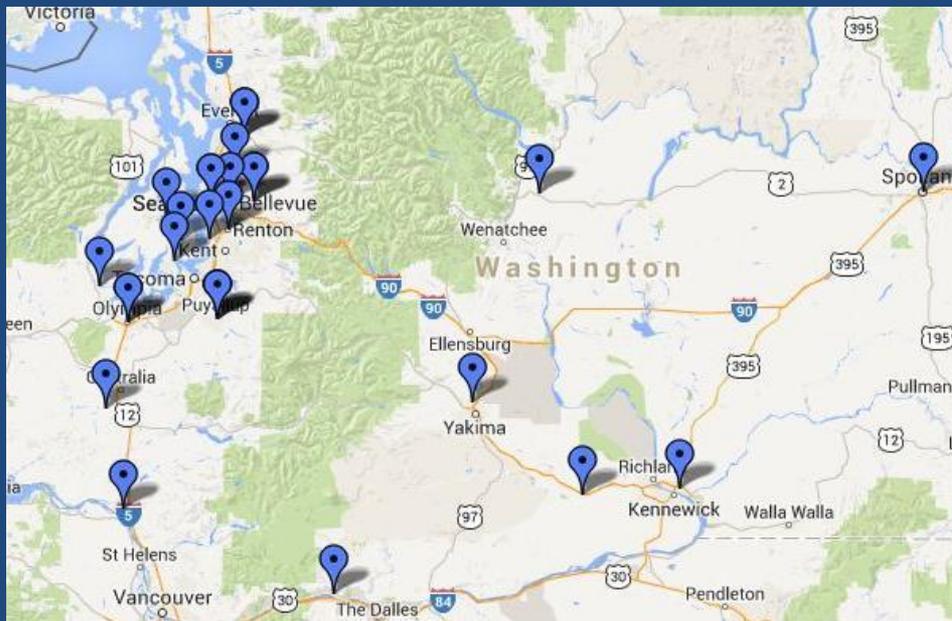
# The Benefits

- Documented in the 2005 Richard Louv book *“Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder”*
  - health, education, creativity, self-confidence
- Department’s interests-- in public support for sound policies, in license sales, in resource protection
- The outdoor economy relies on a future with youth outside



# Initial Scoping Work

- Big Tent Committee discusses & decides to seek advice of youth
- Contacted wide range of organizations
- Invited applications



Washington Outdoor Women  
Trout Unlimited  
YMCA Earth Corps.  
Safari Club International  
Yakima Dive Club  
Coastal Marine Resources Committees  
Audubon Washington (multiple locations)  
4-H (statewide)  
Future Farmers of America  
Puget Sound Anglers  
Washington Waterfowl Association  
Boys and Girls Scouts  
Conservation Northwest  
Inland Northwest Wildlife Council  
Ducks Unlimited  
Washington State Youth Conservation Camp  
Pacific Education Institute  
Sierra Club, Inner City Outings  
Teens in Public Service  
Regional Fisheries Enhancement Groups  
Big Tent Coalition  
Washington Trails Association  
Urban Wilderness Project  
**Among Others . . .**

Information is subject to changes and amendments over time

# Scoping Group Process and Expectations

- Received 25 applications- staff and Big Tent Committee reviewed applicant's short essays
- Selected 7 youth from around the state with diverse backgrounds
- Explained need and set expectations including written report from youth advisors
- Held a meeting in Olympia in October with assistance from Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction, and outside environmental education experts
- Outcome: engaged youth in leadership role & obtained initial advice on permanent youth council concept

# Scoping Session: Insights & Recommendations

- Identified Barriers to Outdoor Experience
  - lack of knowledge of where & how to recreate
  - peers' negative associations with outdoor activities
  - lack of family traditions or supporting social network
  - distance from natural landscapes & recreational areas
- Enthusiasm for serving as catalysts in their communities
- Environmental education: Science in the schools as a way to open the door to outdoor recreation
- Need for refined communications to inform youth of options

# Scoping Session: Insights & Recommendations

- Need for strategies to:
  - Create partnerships with outdoor organizations
  - Create local youth groups or clubs to foster interest
  - Target parents to encourage outdoor recreation
  - Overcome barriers including stigma, costs, lack of knowledge of outdoor activities
- Identified topics, strategies will require more peer-to-peer communication

# Proposed Council Composition

- Nine youth, ages 14 to 18 to serve two year terms
- Youth from communities across the state
- High school or college students with at least a C average
- Parental/Guardian approval
- Application statement



# Draft Brochure under review



## “Step Out Into the Real World”

### An Opportunity to join WDFW’s Youth Outdoors Initiative

#### How can you get involved?

Please join us as we work with our young leaders to introduce more youth to outdoor activities and stimulate them to “Step Out into the Real World.” The initiative requires energy and resources from external partners. The Department can accept contributions to the effort in time, ideas and personal participation. The Department can also accept funds on behalf of this project to support its conservation, protection and resource management aims as outlined in State Law, RCW 77.12.039.

RCW 77.12.039: The director may accept money or real property from persons under conditions requiring the use of the property or money for the protection, rehabilitation, preservation, or conservation of the state wildlife, fish, and shellfish resources, or in settlement of claims for damages to wildlife, fish, and shellfish resources.

Initial efforts will focus on developing resources to create a part time staff position and manage the meeting and facilitation investments required to create a functioning youth council. Additionally, the first priorities of the council will include establishing systems and exploring ideas the young people have already generated for better connecting youth with outdoor activities throughout Washington.

Whether developing independent and capable personalities, increasing young people’s health, or building Washington’s outdoor economy, your support for this youth council is a commitment to the future.



#### We’re focusing on young people

Many young people increasingly live in a ‘virtual world’ of high-tech gadgets and artificial light. They don’t often unplug and step outside. For many reasons, they simply don’t engage in the challenges or enjoy the pleasures of outdoor activity.

Evidence abounds to document the costs of this inactivity in poor health, obesity, and alarming rates of disease among young people who should be our healthiest and fittest citizens. What may be worse is the growing disconnection between our student-age citizens and the values and benefits of conservation and outdoor recreation.

We’re concerned about these trends, and we know you are, too.

That’s why the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the citizen members of our state Fish and Wildlife Commission have begun the *Youth Outdoors Initiative*.

It’s often difficult for the older generation to motivate young people to go outside. By working directly with young people to address these challenges, we believe we’ll generate great ideas from young adult leaders who already love the outdoors to bring their peers outdoors.



#### We need your help

We’re inviting a wide range of outdoor-related businesses and associations, non-profit groups and community leaders to join us in this effort.

Outdoor recreation represents a multi-billion dollar industry whose future depends on the participation of young people, and we all have a stake in the health, competence, and well-being of future generations.

We need your participation – and we need your financial support – to underwrite support the activities of our Youth Council as it helps to identify strategies to connect our younger generations to the real world. WDFW and our Commission are making a large investment in the Youth Council, but we know we need a broad-based coalition of partners to give this initiative the energy and momentum it needs to succeed.

We intend to lead the nation in involving youth in the outdoors, and to do it by building partnerships across Washington.

#### What we’ve done so far

In October, we assembled a group of bright, energetic, young outdoorsmen and outdoorswomen to share their thoughts on how to reach their peers with our message. We identified these youth leaders through our extensive network of contacts in the state’s fishing, hunting, public service and conservation organizations.

To our delight, our youth leaders showed unabashed enthusiasm for this concept. They urged us to create a permanent youth advisory group. In an impressive writing report, they suggested specific strategies for recruiting more of their peers into outdoor activities.

Encouraged by the outcome of that scoping effort, we are ready to make a longer-term commitment to this effort to draw youth outdoors. Specifically, we plan to initiate a permanent youth advisory council. With the new council’s help, we will develop robust strategies for youth-oriented communications and outreach, citizen science efforts, and environmental education in order to encourage youth participation in fishing, hunting and outdoor activities.

*To do that, we need your help.*

#### Contact Information:

[wdfw.wa.gov](http://wdfw.wa.gov)



WDFW and the Fish and Wildlife Commission practice impartiality in regard to public policy determinations. Donations imply no commitment to donating individuals or organizations that may contribute to this effort.

18 DECEMBER 2013

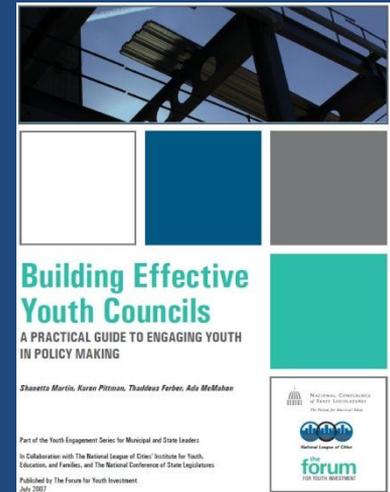
# Summary: advantages of a council

- Connections -- with communities, schools and stakeholder organizations
- Partners – with youth advocates as partners in conservation, citizen science and recreation goals
- Insights -- standing focus group, insights into communications, marketing
- Leadership -- first of its kind among Washington State agencies, fresh, future-oriented perspectives

# Building a solid foundation

## *Six Keys from "Building Effective Youth Councils"*

1. Membership: The right youth leaders
2. Work environment: convenient locations and appropriate meeting frequency
3. Infrastructure: Sufficient Admin Support
4. Youth capacity
5. Motivation
6. Access to policymakers/youth constituents



# Next Steps

- **In the long-term, staff & budget support still to be identified**
- Potential for private sector support– Big Tent concept
- Legal & ethical issues under review with AG and Auditors offices
- Set fundraising goal & implement
- Form Permanent Youth Advisory Council
- Design media and community relations strategy
- Establish Council deliverables & assign Commissioner-mentor for each youth leader

# Evaluation

*After two years . . .*

- Did we get good ideas?
- Have we opened communication channels with youth?
- Can we point to beneficial impacts?
- Are parents and youth satisfied with their experience?
- Are applications coming via word of mouth from previous participants?
- Is funding sustained and sustainable?



